

This Truth Module addresses the workplace issue of:

**Am I willing to go against the grain at work when biblical values are at stake?**



# Cutting Edge Christianity



Each night for nearly six weeks, Tom slipped his car into a parking space overlooking the river. Rolling down his window so he could hear the sound of the water bursting over the rocks, he wept quietly. It was a private ritual, a sweeping out of pent-up emotion that started with his first waking hour of the day and rarely left him, even here by the river. Day after day he drove to a branch office and met with worker after worker, delivering the news that there wasn't any work left for them here.

Some got angry and shouted at him as if he were personally responsible. Some tried to make him feel better, accepting the news with grace. Others wept or tried to talk him into keeping them. A very few got physical, throwing items or punching walls. Tom handled every discussion with committed stoicism. He was intent on letting the need of the individual worker dictate how the session went. Those who needed to cry were encouraged to cry. Those who needed to yell were allowed to yell. He stayed as long as the emotion

dictated, and he never retaliated. He also never wavered. He knew from experience the worst thing he could do for this group of workers was to give them hope they would be called back. It wasn't going to happen, and he owed it to them not to take the easy way out by saying "maybe..."

Sixty workers in six weeks. Always the same pattern. Always ending by the river, emptying out the residue of the sadness he witnessed every day.

For most of the workers this had been the only place they'd ever worked. Years and years of security, years and years of relationships, years and years of labor uninterrupted by the changing technology.

Not any more.

The severance packages helped. The continued insurance benefits, too, but almost nobody seemed interested in the retraining initiatives. Some because they were afraid, some because they were angry, but most refused because it felt too much like a hand-out.

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Tom had guessed that would be the response. There wasn't any pleasure in discovering he was right.

On the last night of the last notice, Tom tidied his desk, slipped his resignation

under the owner's door and headed to the river one last time. Getting out of his car, he started shouting at God.

If you were Tom, what would you have shouted?

## Introduction

Since God is glorified by our best effort, by humility, by an attitude of service, and by integrity and competence, then these become new measuring sticks we use to determine success.

*God expects us to be on the cutting edge of the redeeming aspects of our culture.*

But succeeding isn't enough. Being competent isn't enough. Avoiding sinful behavior isn't enough.

God wants working Christians to be leaders. He wants us to be innovators. He wants us to be creative. In short, He expects us to be on the cutting edge of the redeeming aspects of our culture.

To prepare for this study, please read all of Chapter 41 in the book of Genesis—the story of Joseph's rise to the number two position in the kingdom of ancient Egypt. As you read, write down your impressions of Joseph in the space below.

## In Depth

Where do we see Joseph exercising initiative in this chapter?

### SCRIPTURE PATH

Genesis 41

What about creativity?

Joseph was providing security for the people of Egypt. (By the way, don't miss the fact that these were not his people.) He had no way of knowing God was using him to provide security for his family. In a later chapter the very brothers who sold Joseph



into slavery are rescued from the effects of the drought. What parallels might you draw from this for God's ability to accomplish multiple purposes through your work?

Turning aside from the idea of provision for our own families, though, can you think of a situation where the actions of Joseph might have been useful to Tom in the workplace snapshot at the beginning of this chapter?

Business historians teach that there are cycles in commerce, employment, even technology that form fairly predictable paths. They argue with good reason that we consign ourselves to repeating mistakes in the marketplace because we refuse to learn these patterns—or even when we learn them that we fail to introduce variables to change their ebb and flow. What often results is inefficient use of resources and needless impact on employees and even investors.

Joseph not only interpreted Pharaoh's dream, he introduced a plan to stem the effects. Especially for Christian managers and leaders in businesses, we owe our workers (customers, investors, shareholders, etc.) a commitment to long-term planning that

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anticipates these ebbs and flows, and mitigates their effects on the people God puts under our care.

Can you think of other times in Scripture when creativity and long-term planning are evident? Think about the problems of administration Moses faced and Jethro's advice to him. Think about Daniel and his friends who were in an executive training program that violated the principles of their faith. Think about Nehemiah and his leadership in rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. Scripture is full of the ac-

counts of leaders who exhibited not merely a flair for short-term solutions, but plans that mitigated future problems for the people under their charge as well.

Even the concept of grace is an example of this principle. God, anticipating the sinful rebellion of humans, made a way for their redemption. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."



God didn't design us to serve ourselves. He designed us to be in fellowship with Him, and to take care of others as we tend His creation. The role of the Christian at work is to find ways to express their appreciation to God by caring for His creation and its people—and to do so in cutting-edge, creative, compassionate ways.

When the focus of our work is centered on serving others, then He takes care of the issues of provision in our lives. When the focus of our work is on provision, then the work He expects us to be doing sometimes goes undone, and the suffering of others is our fault.

*Work is a trust placed in our hands by God, with an eye towards letting us work alongside Him in the lives of others.*

Work is not primarily a competition. It's not merely a way to provide for ourselves. It's not a way to keep ourselves occupied until eternity arrives. It's not a way to earn God's free gift of grace.

Work is our way of glorifying God because of His provision for us—eternally in the case of grace, and temporally in the case of shelter, food and basic needs. Work is a trust placed in our hands by God, with an eye towards letting us work alongside Him in the lives of others.

Unless we step outside the idea that our jobs serve us, we consign ourselves to jobs with little eternal satisfaction, and we consign those God places in our care to rollercoaster rides that teach them little of a loving God.

In your work, what problems are you overlooking? Whose voice do you hear when others look to you for answers?

## Common Sense and Eternal Principles

- ◆ Christians should be leaders in problem-solving not only in the culture, but the workplace as well.
- ◆ God created us to be in fellowship with Him, but He also expects us to be on the cutting edge of redeeming aspects of our workplace and culture.
- ◆ The past offers insight into solving problems in the present.
- ◆ While the Bible teaches us about God, it also teaches us how to tend His creation.
- ◆ If we study the way biblical characters confronted dilemmas in their cultures and their lives, we can often learn ways to address dilemmas in our own workplaces and our own lives.

# What's Breaking your Rhythm at Work?



- ▶ **We all have a Work Rhythm unique to each of us**, but In our busy work lives, our rhythm with God can be overpowered or compromised by issues common to us all. Economic instability, interpersonal conflict, temptation, pride all have a way of rendering us out of tune.

Visit [www.WorkLife.org](http://www.WorkLife.org) for more on Maestro WorkLife Coaching, and pinpoint your own rhythm breakers.

Explore Maestro™ today!



**Maestro™ is a self-directed, web-based coaching system** that helps you target and overcome issues breaking your rhythm—no matter what job faces you Monday morning. Maestro™ Includes:

- ▶ A Work Issues Assessment
- ▶ Weekly email-based Maestro™ Coaching
- ▶ Maestro Truth Modules for in depth study.
- ▶ Maestro Tuning Tools for dealing with specific work challenges.



## ▶ The Top 30 WorkLife Issues

Check out these top WorkLife Issues!

Go to [WorkLife.org](http://WorkLife.org) to learn more.

CLARITY	Do I understand why God created work in the first place?
	Do I relate to God through my work?
	Do I connect eternal significance to my actual work?
	Do I simultaneously serve God and my earthly boss, making sure I don't "turn off" my spiritual life at work?
	Do I narrow my focus each day by setting clear limits and boundaries on my ambitions, so that work doesn't take over my life?
CALLING	Are my God-given talents, passions and temperament aligned to my present job?
	Do I see my work calling as really serving society and God?
	Is my work ethic free from compulsions such as: meaningless goals, accumulating temporary success, and a desire to please everyone?
	Do I learn from detours, zig-zags, false starts, and dead ends in my job to eliminate self-destructive patterns of behavior?
BALANCE	Do I honor my earthly employer with competency and integrity in order to accomplish God's purpose?
	Do I manage stress and discouragement by practicing the principle of rest and recreation?
	Do I manage my time without being distracted by unfocused impulses or becoming a slave to my schedule?
	Am I keeping a connection with God and my family in the midst of my hectic work life?
INFLUENCE	Do I manage all my resources (i.e., time, energy, talent, money) in a way that reflects God's perspective?
	Do I avoid the pitfalls of compensation and position discontentment to maximize my impact for Christ?
	Do I earn the respect of my coworkers in a way that blends a gracious spirit, keen intellect, courageous heart, and cultural sensitivity?
	Do I look for natural opportunities to talk about God that are appropriate to my workplace?
	Do I effectively answer the tough questions coworkers ask me about God, life, and faith?
SKILLS	Do I feel prepared to present the gospel message in language that is clear, succinct, and jargon-free, yet faithful to the Scriptures?
	Can I clearly explain the benefits of a relationship with Jesus to those at work?
	Do I regularly grow my practical work skills in order to serve my employer and God?
	Am I seeking and hearing God when making work decisions?
	Do I operate with virtues that honor God (i.e. fairness, graciousness, and compassion)?
RELATIONSHIP	Do I keep promises and tell the truth at work when subtle pressure is used to encourage hype, false appearance, white lies and spin?
	Am I willing to go against the grain at work when biblical values are at stake?
	Do I effectively deal with a difficult boss, serve an unreasonable client, or cooperate with a cynical coworker?
	Do I resolve conflict involving office politics, gossip, slander, favoritism, and unfounded criticism?
	Do I effectively deal with lust at work, including everything from travel temptations to office affairs, from risqué jokes to sexual harassment?
	Do I protect and help the weakest members of my workplace and society in a "survival of the fittest" world?
	Do I seek out and connect with fellow believers at work for support, encouragement and accountability?